

DURHAM CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, January 10, 2018 @ 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers – 101 City Hall Plaza

Pursuant to the proper notification, the Durham City Council held a special meeting on the above date and time in the City Hall Council Chambers located on the first floor at 101 City Hall Plaza with the following members present: Mayor Steve Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Jillian Johnson and Council Members Vernetta Alston, DeDreana Freeman, Mark-Anthony Middleton and Charlie Reece.

Also Present: Acting City Clerk Diana Schreiber.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Schewel stating the purpose of the meeting was to allow persons to speak in favor of their chosen candidate to fill the at-large vacancy position on Council.

Mayor Schewel called the meeting to order and welcomed those persons in attendance on behalf of candidates and who were attending to listen; and thanked the candidates in attendance.

Mayor Schewel conducted the moment of silent meditation.

Council Member Reece led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Iris Ramirez of Fusion, provided bilingual guidance on interpreter services for the Spanish speakers in the audience; explained that she and her assistant, Jorge Gutierrez would be interpreting for non-native speakers; and provided headsets to those needing assistance.

Mayor Schewel explained that there was an excellent slate of at-large candidates; requested all to keep their comments positive; noted the candidates would not be speaking at the meeting; explained each candidate would have a block of time amounting to fifteen minutes where his/her supporters would be allowed to make remarks in either English or Spanish; noted that the interpreter would be employing simultaneous interpretation by summarizing the statements made by the Spanish speakers; and clarified the function of the clock.

The sign-in sheets for speakers were forwarded to the candidates to allow for their approval of the speakers prior to be allowed to speak from the audience to address Council and the public.

Mayor Schewel clarified that the candidates were provided a total of fifteen minute allotments for responses by each group of their supporters.

After the lists were reviewed by the candidates, Mayor Schewel called the following speakers to the podium.

In support of Sheila Arias:

Kimberly Swanson of Powder Springs Place, was a friend and colleague of the candidate in an organization called Moms Rising; and highlighted Ms. Arias courage, resilience and grace.

Beth Messersmith, Beech Slope Way, worked along the candidate for four years; encouraged Council to represent the LatinX in the city; and spoke to Ms. Arias community outreach for families in the areas of health and human services.

Jessica Burroughs, Fortunes Ridge Drive, shared six themes and examples extracted from Moms Rising and its advocacy; and stated Ms. Arias shared resources about immigration and health services, was dependable, possessed courage and had a calling to be a role model for her children.

Tara Lemus of Belvin Avenue, spoke to the candidate's ability to navigate social services for children with special needs and to assist other families, and to advocate for family rights; and highlighted her resiliency, multi-cultural background, communication skills and understanding of diversity.

Jessica Berryman of Basset Hall Drive, spoke of Ms. Arias' advocacy for families with Moms' Rising; spoke in support of the candidates resiliency, fighting nature, and desire to make a difference in Durham; and called on Council to support Ms. Arias' candidacy.

Mayor Schewel asked Ms. Arias to stand to be recognized; the audience applauded in support.

In support of Javiera Caballero:

Ivan Almonte of S. LaSalle Street, explained Ms. Caballero was familiar with the struggles of Latinos in the community with special mention of her work on the PTA; and explained she was capable of being an effective council member.

Chris Huggins of Farthing Street, explained that Ms. Caballero would work tirelessly to hear from all families, no matter their socio-economic backgrounds; and explained she became PTA President at Club Boulevard School in Durham with the goal of making the lives of children better on a broad spectrum.

Tom Miller of Virginia Avenue, representing Peoples Alliance Political Action Committee, supported Ms. Caballero's candidacy as first Latinx member of the Council to represent 1/7 or 14% of the Durham population; and stated she was qualified, passionate and ready to serve.

Laura Heinaine of Chapel Hill Road, explained this was her first visit to Council; explained the candidate was a supporter of equality and as an immigrant, she recognized the challenges faced in the immigrant community with special mention of families' struggles; and urged Council's support of Ms. Caballero.

Andrea Hoff of Governor's Place, urged Council to appoint a representative from the Latino community; and spoke to her experiences with Ms. Caballero as Club Boulevard Elementary School's PTA President in efforts to protect immigrant children.

Alexandra Valladares of East Ellerbee Street, spoke to the candidate's resourcefulness in the managing of a school PTA on a tight budget; believed that Ms. Caballero could bridge those communities that were disenfranchised and without voice; and urged Council's support.

Rodrigo Dorfman of West Knox Street, documentary film-maker; explained that he has witnessed the growth of the Latino community in Durham; noted it was time for representation for un/documented Latinos by a council member; indicated Ms. Caballero was a PTA President; and had a lot of experience with fiscally conservative, budgetary matters.

Mayor Schewel asked Ms. Caballero to stand to be recognized; the audience applauded in support.

In support of Pierce Freelon:

Chris Tiffany, explained the candidate has worked tirelessly for the improvement of children; the candidate had a willingness to listen and to represent young black men; was approachable, cares about a myriad of children of many socio-economic levels and urged Council to vote in his support.

Chris Massenburg of Shawnee Street, had known the candidate for a long time and explained that Mr. Freelon encouraged increasing the capacity of youth in Durham; noted Mr. Freelon was a dedicated, organizer and had the ability to lift his voice to best serve others; and urged Mr. Freelon's appointment to Council.

Angie Santiago of Stafford Drive, stated the candidate was experienced with diversity and ready to contribute immediately; had knowledge of the candidate's collaborative efforts with local organizations solving issues and providing foundations for growth and success; and urged Council to vote for Mr. Freelon.

Jewell Taylor of Valley Drive, member of Black Space; indicated that Mr. Freelon viewed youth as a source of solutions; and urged Mr. Freelon's appointment to City Council.

Elizabeth Turnbull of West Main Street, spoke to her operations as a local restaurateur; spoke to her experiences with Mr. Freelon and his commitment to Durham, affordable housing, local workers and youth; and explained Mr. Freelon understood the needs of community members and the reciprocal.

Gabriel Eng-Gadz of West Geer Street, spoke to Mr. Freelon's support of local artists and charities; emphasized the candidate crossed between many representative groups giving him a special perspective; was a solid citizen, great friend and father; and urged Council appoint Mr. Freelon.

Michelle Gonzales-Green of East Trinity Avenue, addressed her experiences with running a small non-profit near Motorco; spoke to Mr. Freelon efforts in conducting fundraisers to support teens of color; felt the candidate had the ability to bridge diverse communities; and urged Council's appointment.

George Roberson, Catskill Court, supporter of the candidate's efforts to improve the lives of youth; asked the candidate to explain what he would do for the community; to which Mr. Freelon responded that he would combat poverty by creating jobs for youth and institute a production economy.

Mayor Schewel asked Mr. Freelon to stand to be recognized; the audience applauded in support.

In support of Kaaren Haldeman:

Joslyn Simms of Summit Avenue, stated the candidate understood what the community needed was to get jobs for men, remove guns from their hands and ensure safety for children to live and walk in their communities; stated Ms. Haldeman understood the negative impacts of gentrification; and urged Council's support of Ms. Haldeman.

Volita Holmes of West Club Boulevard, explained she served on various committees with the candidate who had a work ethic of a champion prize fighter; and explained that Ms. Haldeman fought educational disparities, relentless killings & corruption of minds by guns; and called on Council for their support of the candidate.

Darryl Moss of Cozart Street in Creedmoor, NC; supported Ms. Haldeman to fill the vacant Council seat; offered a view from the outside of Durham; spoke to the candidate as a warrior, fighting for fair courts; and stated she was courageous and motivated by challenges.

Andrew Stillwell of West Bridlewood Trail, spoke with conviction that Ms. Haldeman would be an asset to Council, had outstanding communication skills, was gracious, caring, honest and forthright in expressing her views; and urged Council's support of Ms. Haldeman.

David Denney, explained Ms. Haldeman was dedicated, genuine, caring, a community organizer/activist and sought to ensure Durham remained inclusive and successful for all; and spoke in support of the candidate for Council.

Jessica Hulick of Goodwin Road, noted that the candidate was a founder of Moms Demand Action; spoke about Ms. Haldeman as an individual resolved to find solutions and was extremely intelligent; she spoke to Ms. Haldeman as a mentor who promoted the voices of women; and urged Council appoint Ms. Haldeman.

Mayor Schewel asked Ms. Haldeman to stand to be recognized; the audience applauded in support.

In support of Shelia Huggins:

Emerson Kirby, a Durham youth, read remarks about Shelia Huggins, her mother; detailed the candidate's experiences with community outreach, employment with the City and on various non-profit organizations; and announced that Ms. Huggins would not be seeking the at-large council vacancy at this time.

Mayor Schewel appreciated and was impressed by the remarks made by Ms. Kirby. Many in the audience applauded.

In support of Carl Rist:

Matt Kopac of Woodland Drive, spoke on behalf of Carl Rist; after his favorable remarks about the candidate, summarized that Mr. Rist desired to withdraw from the process; and explained it was Mr. Rist's decision to endorse candidate Javiera Caballero for the at-large council vacancy.

The audience applauded in support of Mr. Rist and Ms. Caballero.

In support of Pilar Rocha-Goldberg:

Sonia Rodriguez, a long-time friend of the candidate, spoke on her behalf and in support of her integrity, dedication to preserving the community's Hispanic roots, honesty, responsible nature and a complete leader; and indicated the candidate understood the problems of Hispanics in the community with special mention of individuals experiencing certain problems and the ability of the candidate to solve those problems.

Steve Toler of Mill House Lane, spoke to his experiences in chairing two Durham County bond referendums; spoke highly of the candidate's ability to listen and problem solve in the Latino and non-Latino communities; explained he was a member of the People's Alliance; and supported the candidate in a leadership role with a focus on diversity and her extensive local experiences; and complimented Durham that there were so many qualified, passionate candidates.

Cristina Morales of Garrett Road, offered her opinion of the candidate; viewed the candidate as a resourceful leader with special mention of her work with immigrants; explained the candidate played a role in meetings that pertained to outreach efforts within the Hispanic community; spoke to the candidate's strong work ethic and strength as a woman; and based on the candidate's experience with the Hispanic non-profit El Centro, she was ready and able to make decisions that would favorably impact the Hispanic community.

Kevin McDonald of Stewart Drive, expressed support for the candidate and a long-time friend; noted she was passionate, cared for people and had worked in the community to know what people needed and why; and stated that the candidate sought to create a better lives for others.

Miguel Macedo of Wilkins Drive, explained it had been a honor to know the candidate; and had known her for over ten years; stated Ms. Rocha-Goldberg was a valuable role-model for youth, teaching them to follow their dreams and goals; explained that the candidate possessed much wisdom and was a person who recognized the needs within the Hispanic community; and noted that the candidate had a lot of support within the Hispanic community and in turn, had given the community a sense of security and hope.

Marjorie Black endorsed the candidate with special mention of the candidate's ability to be an advocate and change agent for diversity, inclusiveness, safety, empowerment and economic prosperity; spoke to the candidate's heart, passion, tenacity and integrity; and explained that the candidate was a good listener, graceful, compassionate, confident, self-less, a bridge builder with a passion for excellence; and stated the candidate personified the role of public servant.

Salomon Rivas, a long-time friend of the candidate, spoke to the candidate's character as serious, decisive, dedicated to her family and her capabilities; stated she recognized the needs of the Hispanic community and highlighter her work in the Hispanic community for many years; and favored the candidate's role as one of impartial to benefit all citizens; and supported the candidate for the City of Durham.

Teresita Maz, Chapel Hill resident, explained the candidate brought people together and was able to lead, brought out the best in people and brought forward results; had knowledge and understanding of the issues impacting the Hispanic community; and spoke to the candidate's character of grace, kindness, intelligence and productivity.

Rebecca Reyes of West Murray Avenue, spoke to the candidate's background as a Duke researcher of Latino children nutrition; explained the candidate's voluntary service at El Centro in Durham; and stated the candidate's advocacy and compassion of members of the LGBTQ community and that was celebrated by many.

Mayor Schewel asked Ms. Rocha-Goldberg to stand to be recognized; the audience applauded in support.

After the last group of speakers had their opportunity to speak in support of his/her candidate, Mayor Schewel requested the candidates to assemble in front of the dais for a brief meeting to explain the subsequent process that would take place on January 11, 2018 in City Hall, 101 City Hall Plaza in the Committee Room at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Diana Schreiber
Acting City Clerk